

VZCZCXRO7885
PP RUEHLN RUEHPOD RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHMO #3777 3661240
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 311240Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1404
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS MOSCOW 003777

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KNNP](#) [OREP](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: DUMA DEFENSE COMMITTEE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIR BABICH - MEETING

WITH CODEL TAUSCHER

1. (SBU) Summary: In a December 15 meeting with Representatives Ellen Tauscher, Loretta Sanchez, Rick Larsen, and Doug Lamborn, Duma Defense Committee, First Deputy Chair Mikhail Babich said that Russia had high expectations for the incoming Obama Administration. He welcomed the proposal for regular meetings between the House Armed Services Committee and the Duma Defense Committee starting next year, and asked to learn more about how the Congress oversaw the Department of Defense and other defense-related agencies. He noted that the reported delay in deployment of a missile defense system to Poland and the Czech Republic was an opportunity to engage in dialogue, although he underlined that Russia perceived these sites as a NATO threat on Russia's borders. Babich offered continued Russian assistance in countering Iran's nuclear program and in non-proliferation. End summary.

Welcoming the New Administration

2. (SBU) In a December 15 meeting, Duma Defense Committee First Deputy Chair Mikhail Babich told Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA), Representative Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA), and Representative Doug Lamborn (R-CO) that Russia had high expectations for the incoming administration, "we hope we can solve all of the problems, untie all the knots, and find a way out of the situation we are in." The brief session focused on Representative Tauscher's proposed bilateral inter-parliamentary committee, opportunities for dialogue on missile defense, non-proliferation, and Iran.

Legislative Dialogue

3. (SBU) Babich warmly welcomed Representative Tauscher's proposal for the formation of a bilateral inter-parliamentary committee between the House Armed Services Committee and the Duma Defense Committee. Both he and Representative Tauscher agreed that planning should start for a series of meetings early next year. Representative Tauscher outlined a future Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), non-proliferation, Iran, and weapons of mass destruction as topics the two committees could share ideas and experiences as legislators.

4. (SBU) The Duma Committee Deputy expressed an interest to learn from the Congress on how it implemented oversight of the Department of Defense and other defense-related agencies. As Russia confronts two major reform initiatives -- reform of the military and of military industries -- Babich asked to share experiences on these topics. In particular, he would be interested to learn how Congressional committees organized the work of expert communities in developing legislation.

Missile Defense

5. (SBU) Due to testing concerns, Representative Tauscher reported that there would be a delay in deployment of a missile defense (MD) system to Poland and the Czech Republic. She told him, however, that the U.S. reserved the right to deploy defenses appropriate to

respond to the threat posed by Iran and "other current and emergent threats." Calling the approach of Representative Tauscher "smart" and "a very reasonable thing to do," Babich welcomed the time this delay allows for dialogue. He cautioned that the idea for a third MD site was "not the best solution." He countered that the agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic constituted a threat, as they represented the establishment of NATO infrastructure on Russia's border. He also criticized the U.S. approach of pursuing activities, when Russia proposed initiatives.

Proliferation and Iran

16. (SBU) While recognizing U.S. concerns with Iran's nuclear program, Babich said that Russia is no less concerned, especially since they are "so close to us." He stated that Russia understood "third tier" countries very well, and offered to work together to prevent proliferation. "The desire of both sides to stop activities and sit and talk is a good sign," he said.

17. (U) The CODEL did not clear this cable.

BEYRLE